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Indian prices, and a fall in the purchasing power of the rupee. In short, with such stiff and unchanging material as is presented by the Indian people, changes do not take place at once; but it is very clear that in spite of the friction economic laws have been operative. An extract, published elsewhere in this number, shows how little influence silver has had on the exportation of wheat.

The fluctuations of exchange, of which we have heard a great deal in the past, are well treated; and the conclusion is reached that no permanent injury can be inflicted on a country's foreign trade by such minor causes. Any real or permanent difficulty lies not in the rates of exchange, but in what lies behind the exchanges.

The monograph closes with an examination of the Indian budget and an historical account of the currency to the date of closing the mints to the free coinage of silver, June 26, 1893. The book is valuable, not for any great originality—for the subject precludes that—but for its good sense, its scholarly quality, its impartial presentation of data, and for the fact that it throws much timely light on the question of silver.

J. LAURENCE LAUGHLIN.

The History of Trade Unionism. By SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1894. 12mo. pp. xvi+558.

ANOTHER volume is added to the histories of the English working-man in Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*. To gather the materials for this narrative the authors have searched the archives of the older trade unions, where they have found "minute-books in which generations of diligent, if unlettered, secretaries, the true historians of a great movement, have struggled to record the doings of their committees, and files of Trade Union periodicals, ignored even by the British Museum, through which plans and aspirations of ardent working-class politicians and administrators have been expounded month by month." The first two chapters of this working-class history, which deal with the origins of trade unionism and the struggle for existence down to 1825, are made up from government records—"the journals of the House of Commons, the minutes of the Privy Council, the publications of the Record Office, the innumerable broad-

sheet petitions to Parliament and old tracts relating to Trade." While turning over these records of the past the authors have found opportunities to attend meetings of unions and of executive committees; they have talked with representative employés in different industries and with managers and foremen. And so have brought their history down into the present time.

An examination of all societies containing 1,000 members or more and of nearly all societies containing less than that number, has led the authors to estimate the total membership of the trade unions in the United Kingdom at the end of 1992, at from 1,500,000 to 1,600,000; *i. e.*, about four per cent. of the population, or 20 per cent. of those eligible for membership. Membership is not, however, distributed evenly over the country but is concentrated in industrial centers, and in certain industries. Thus the coal mining industry, the cotton manufacture, and the engineering trade number some 750,000 members in trade unions, or one half the total trade union membership of the United Kingdom. The strength of the unions, however, even in these industries and districts where the percent of membership is very high, cannot, according to our authors, be expressed in figures, owing to the large but indefinite number of sympathizers who may or may not at one time have been members of some union and allowed their membership to lapse, but who in case of any industrial disturbance would certainly act with the unions.

It appears from this account that the English unions are many sided organizations. In addition to their functions as mediators between their own members and employers they serve as social clubs, as out of work benefit associations, and as political organizations. In this last capacity they exert an ever present influence on legislation; they maintain a lobby at the House of Commons and elect each year a Parliamentary Committee to watch over proposed enactments. The influence of the unions is also strongly felt in municipal elections where they have been instrumental in forcing the adoption among other measures of "fair wages" clauses. Trade unionists feel that they cannot expect legislation favorable to them except as they are able to force it upon one or the other of the two great parties. They accordingly seek political power, and stand ready to vote solid as their committees may advise at all parliamentary and local elections.

The writers of the present *History of Trades Unionism* do not find that the modern trade unionism has sprung out of any preexisting

organizations, as out of the trade guilds or other mediæval fraternities. They find the first evidence of modern trade unionism in petitions and complaints made to the House of Commons early in the eighteenth century against associations of laborers. "If," say our authors, "we examine the evidence of the rise of combinations in particular trades, we see the Trade Union springing, not from any particular institution, but from every opportunity for the meeting together of wage-earners of the same trade." The occasion of the meeting might be no more serious matter than the disposing of a "social pin," or it might be the conduct of a "tumultuous strike." Analogies to the modern unions may be found in the ancient associations, but the unions themselves seem not to have grown out of older associations.

Incompetent leaders and walking delegates looking out for their own interest, as well as the ignorance and inexperience of the members, has brought trade unionism into disrepute in this country. The unions have often used their power unwisely, to say the least, in ordering and protracting strikes; they have not yet learned the lesson which experience has taught the English unions—that the strike is the last, not the first resort. The unions have been so managed in this country that they have come to be regarded as organizations for conducting strikes and aggravating labor troubles generally. In this respect they present a striking contrast to the British unions of today which have chosen to follow a conservative and pacific policy. The English unions have found that strikes are more effective the less frequently they are ordered. Hasty strikes are prevented by the very strict rules made binding upon officers of the local branch associations. These local officers are further in close communication with the District Committees and General Secretaries, and cannot order a strike without the approval of these superior officers. As custodians of the societies' funds, the superior officers form a conservative element in the societies, and do not willingly order a strike or any other action which may drain the treasury. A strike is seldom ordered where there is not a good chance of success and a real grievance. By adherence to this policy the trade unionists have gained the respect of their employers, and have certainly lost none of their power. They have also gained in prestige by refusing to admit any but skillful workmen to their associations.

JOHN CUMMINGS.